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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage April 13 on the corruption scandals surrounding former Presidential Office Deputy Secretary-General Chen Che-nan; the opposition parties' veto of President Chen Shui-bian's nomination of Hsieh Wen-ting as the state public prosecutor-general Tuesday; and the upcoming economic forum between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "Taiwan Does Not Exclude the Possibility of Unilaterally Opening [to Beijing] Taiwan's Tourism [Market] and Cross-Strait Charter Flight [Business]." The sub-headline added: "On the Eve of KMT-CCP Economic Forum, the Mainland Affairs Council [Says It] Hopes to Complete Negotiations [with China] in Six Months. Speaking of Cross-Strait Policies, Premier Su Says Whatever Needs to Be Done Should Be Done and [Taiwan] Needs Not Subject Itself to Others." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a news story on its front page with the headline: "China Uses Taiwan-made Numerical Control Machines to Produce [the Critical Spare Parts] for Weapons [Used Against the Island].. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," on the other hand, ran a front-page headline news story that said "Three U.S. Aircraft Carriers to Hold Exercises off Guam in June."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an article in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and a commentary in the pro-unification "United Daily News" both discussed the notion of "one China with each side having its own interpretation." The two articles agreed that since Beijing already said it is willing to return to the "1992 Consensus," it means that it is interested in resuming talks with Taiwan on the basis of "one China with different interpretations." A commentary in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," however, criticized the KMT-CCP economic forum by calling it a "saboteur's dreamland" that intends to isolate the Chen Shui-bian administration. End summary.

A) "The KMT Does Not Know What It Is Fighting for"

KMT Central Committee Member Chang Si-kang opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (4/13):

"... The [future] portrait of cross-Strait relations revealed in the meeting between [President] Chen Shui-bian and [KMT Chairman] Ma Ying-jeou [last week] will have a tugging influence on the United States and China. As Taipei has started to 'define' cross-Strait relations, the roadmap of the triangular relationships between Washington, Beijing and Taipei will very likely develop in the way Taipei depicted. President Chen said he hopes Beijing would recognize the notion of 'one China with each side having its own interpretation,' but did he not know that the essence of the '1992 Consensus' is exactly 'one China with each side having its own

'interpretation'? Since Beijing already said it is willing to return to the '1992 Consensus,' how can it be not aware of the contents of the consensus? Chen's remarks only showed that in his heart, he simply resisted the cross-Straight talks 'out of spite.' ..."

B) "'One China with Different Interpretations?' A-bian Throws out a Ball; Is Hu Jintao Going to Catch It Or Not?"

Lee Yun-chieh, a professor at National Open University, opined in the pro-unification: United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/13):

"... To ask the Beijing authorities to reply 'whether the 1992 Consensus means one China with different interpretations' is actually asking Beijing 'how it views the Republic of China.' ...

"PFP Chairman James Soong signed a six-point conference communique with Chinese President Hu Jintao May 12 2005. The first of the six-point communique, which was tagged with the theme of 'urging [both sides of the Taiwan Strait] to resume talks on an equal footing based on the 1992 Consensus,' listed the original texts verbally used by Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, respectively, in 1992. Judging against the backdrop that Soong started his 'bridging journey' to China carrying with him the ten-point consensus he reached with President Chen Shui-bian [in February 2005], [it seemed evident that] these texts showed Beijing was willing to engage in cross-Straight talks with the Bian administration on the basis of the notion of 'one China with different interpretations.' [We] can thus say that Beijing's attitude then had entered the stage of indirectly recognizing the Republic of China. It is a pity that Chen regretted and denied afterwards [his consensus with Soong], and as a result, the cross-Straight impasse still continued until now. ...

"... China suspected that the Green camp would interpret the one China as Taiwan independence. In particular, in the wake of Chen's manipulation of issues such as the 'cessation of the National Unification Council' and 'Constitutionally one Taiwan', it will be even more difficult for Hu to give a positive response to Chen's call. ..."

C) "KMT-CCP Forum Is a Saboteur's Dreamland"

Liu Kuan-teh, a political commentator based in Taipei, commented in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (4/12):

"... The timing of this year's KMT-CCP forum is politically calculated and should be seen as part of Beijing's 'divide and conquer' strategy to isolate the administration of President Chen Shui-bian. It provides Hu [Jintao] with a means of blaming the current cross-strait impasse on Chen when Hu meets Bush. ... Utilizing Taiwan's domestic politics is the core of Beijing's underhand strategy. However, it is the KMT's willingness to dance to China's tune that reinforces Beijing's capacity to ignore the Chen administration. It is also clear that Hu will use the example of the KMT-CCP talks to convince his US counterpart that Chen and the DPP are the major obstacles toward cross-strait dialogue.

"Beijing's philosophy of 'uniting with the lesser enemy to oppose the main enemy' fits with the KMT's goal and Lien's personal desire to open the door to China. Nevertheless, the KMT and Lien's scheme runs the risk of sabotaging the national interest, national security, sovereignty and dignity. ... It is of utmost importance that members of the international community, especially our friends in the US, are able to decipher Beijing's strategy and demand an equal and peaceful negotiation between China and Taiwan."

YOUNG